

Amendments to the Claims:

1. (Currently Amended) A container, comprising:
a container body defined by a sidewall, an opening defined in the container body, the opening circumscribed by ~~[[an]]~~ a circular edge of the sidewall;
a flange joined to the circular edge of the sidewall, the flange encircling the opening, the flange projecting from the sidewall in a radial direction, the flange defining an outer surface that faces generally away from the container body, ~~the outer surface having a width in the radial direction~~ the flange having a circular peripheral edge generally parallel to but radially offset by an offset distance relative to the circular edge of the sidewall such that a width of the flange defined between the circular edge of the sidewall and the circular peripheral edge of the flange varies about a circumference of the flange by said offset distance; and
a flexible membrane lid sealed to the outer surface of the flange to initially close the opening, the membrane lid being sealed to the outer surface by a seal formed between a sealant on the membrane lid and a sealant on the flange, the seal extending continuously about the opening, ~~the seal having a width in the radial direction;~~
wherein the varying width of the flange causes the seal having to have a portion of reduced width relative to other portions of the seal such that a peel force required for peeling the membrane lid from the flange has a lower value at said reduced-width portion relative to the other portions of the seal.
2. (Original) The container of claim 1, wherein the reduced-width portion of the seal comprises a minority of a total circumferential length of the seal.
3. (Original) The container of claim 1, wherein the width of the reduced-width portion of the seal is at least about 30 percent smaller than the width of the other portions of the seal.
4. (Original) The container of claim 1, wherein the membrane lid defines a pull-tab portion located in registration with the reduced-width portion of the seal.
5. (Canceled)

6. (Canceled)
7. (Original) The container of claim 1, wherein the container body is an extrusion blow-molded plastic structure.
8. (Original) The container of claim 1, wherein the flange projects radially inwardly from the sidewall.
9. (Original) The container of claim 1, wherein the flange projects radially outwardly from the sidewall.
10. (Original) The container of claim 1, wherein the flange is substantially planar.
11. (Original) The container of claim 1, wherein the membrane lid comprises a substrate and a layer of the sealant at least partially covering one side of the substrate.
12. (Original) The container of claim 11, wherein the substrate includes a barrier layer.
13. (Original) The container of claim 12, wherein the barrier layer is selected from the group consisting of metal foil, polyethylene terephthalate, modified polyethylene terephthalate, metallized polyethylene terephthalate, metallized modified polyethylene terephthalate, polyethylene naphthalate, metallized polyethylene naphthalate, metallized polypropylene, metal oxide and silicate coated polyester, metal oxide and silicate coated polypropylene, ethylene vinyl alcohol copolymer, and mixtures thereof.
14. (Original) The container of claim 11, wherein the sealant on the membrane lid is selected from the group consisting of hot melt glue, cold seal adhesive, polypropylene, polypropylene with mineral filler, ethylene/methacrylic acid copolymer ionomer, ethylene vinyl acetate, high-density polyethylene, low-density polyethylene, ethyl methyl acrylate, metallocenes, and mixtures thereof.

15-22. (Canceled)

23. (New) A container, comprising:

a container body defined by a sidewall, an opening defined in the container body, the opening circumscribed by a circular edge of the sidewall;

an annular flange joined to the circular edge of the sidewall, the flange encircling the opening, the flange projecting from the sidewall in a radial direction, the flange defining an outer surface that faces generally away from the container body, the flange having a circular peripheral edge concentric with the circular edge of the sidewall such that a width of the flange defined between the circular edge of the sidewall and the circular peripheral edge of the flange is substantially constant about a circumference of the flange; and

a flexible membrane lid sealed to the outer surface of the flange to initially close the opening, the membrane lid being sealed to the outer surface by a seal formed between a sealant on the membrane lid and a sealant on the flange, the seal extending continuously about the opening, wherein the sealant is applied to the flange in a generally annular pattern, the annular pattern having a first circular edge and a second edge generally parallel to but radially offset by an offset distance relative to the first circular edge such that a width of the seal varies about a circumference of the flange by said offset distance, whereby the seal has a portion of reduced width relative to other portions of the seal such that a peel force required for peeling the membrane lid from the flange has a lower value at said reduced-width portion relative to the other portions of the seal.

24. (New) The container of claim 23, wherein the width of the reduced-width portion of the seal is at least about 30 percent smaller than the width of the other portions of the seal.

25. (New) The container of claim 23, wherein the membrane lid defines a pull-tab portion located in registration with the reduced-width portion of the seal.